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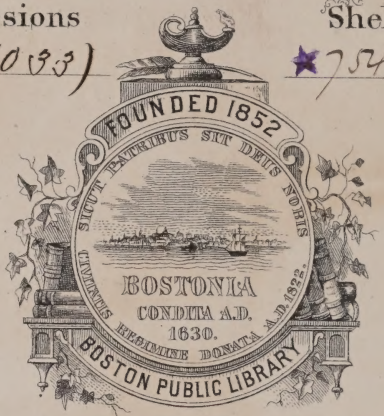

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MINISTERIAL DEVOTEDNESS:

A SERMON

DELIVERED AT THE

ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION

OF THE

REV. JAMES M. BROWN.

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CHARLESTOWN, VA.

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MINISTERIAL DEVOTEDNESS.

I. Cor. ix. 23.—*And this I do for the Gospel's sake.*

It is delightful to see a man engaged in the pursuit of an object, the great importance of which awakens the liveliest feelings of his heart, and calls forth in persevering efforts, the powers of a noble mind. His calculations are made with a clearness and accuracy of conception not easily clouded or confused; his determination is formed with a firmness not easily shaken. Having viewed his object on all sides, in all its bearings and connexions; having estimated the full amount of difficulties to be encountered, and the sacrifices to be made; having arranged the means to be employed, and given to each its proper place of order and subordination; having calculated all the certain or even probable results of success; he commences and perseveres in his pursuit in a style of decision which tells the world that nothing but death, which terminates all human efforts, can arrest his progress, or thrust the object from his grasp. Hope, resting on as firm a basis as human perceptions and conclusions can give, is the powerful and animating principle which prompts him forward. It pierces, with the strength of an eagle's eye, through that gloom which presents to the vision of others nothing but impenetrable darkness. Its light marks out the path to be trodden by his feet through those difficulties which would chill with despair the energies of others. What others value and pursue as their paramount object, as their ultimate end, he values and pursues in exact proportion to its fitness to answer his great design. Those things in which he discovers no such fitness, he bids away from his thoughts and his heart. By this criterion he judges of the character and talents of men; the place which they hold in his estimation will be in proportion to their subserviency to his purpose, to their disposition to fill a subordinate sphere of action. If they are unfit for this, or if they aspire to some higher grade, he has no use for them; their aid, proffered on other conditions, their gratuitous advice, not in accordance with his design, are promptly declined.

Such an object was the Liberty and Independence of America to the mind of Washington, and to the minds of hundreds who thought and felt and acted with him; and such an object was the glory of God in the salvation of guilty and perishing sinners to the mind of Paul. Compared with this, the grandest objects of human pursuit either dwindled into perfect insignificancy, or took their grade of importance according to their fitness to promote his purpose. Never was a great and noble mind more completely filled and controlled than was that of Paul by the light of the Gospel; and never were the feelings of the human heart called into more vigorous action than his were by the power of that light. He had a clear perception of the danger to which mankind were exposed on account of sin, and of the means which God had provided for the complete and eternal salvation of sinners; and he devoted his time, his ta ents

his learning to the employment of these means, with the view of accomplishing this great object. His convictions were as clear, as deep, as immoveably fixed, as they could be if produced by mathematical demonstration. So transcendently important in his estimation was the salvation of sinners that in promoting this cause he is willing to make any sacrifice, even of life itself. Ask him, why all this self-denial, these watchings, these fastings, these labours, these fatigues, these sufferings, this daily peril of life? His answer is ready; *all this I do for the Gospel's sake.* If the cause in which I have embarked require these sacrifices, the object to be attained fully justifies them.

These words, in connexion with his example whose they are, present to our consideration the subject of MINISTERIAL DEVOTEDNESS; a subject worthy of attention at any time, but especially interesting and proper on this occasion, when a young brother is to be ordained to the full work of the gospel ministry. A few remarks will, therefore, be offered, I. respecting its nature; II. respecting its effects, as the proof to the view of others, of its existence and degree.

I. The nature of ministerial devotedness. This, in the first place, is voluntary; the desire and the choice of the man himself. No man is called to the ministry as were Aaron and his sons to the priesthood, by a voice from heaven, designating him by name for this purpose. Yet he does not enter the ministry without a call, and that too from God. But this call he is to infer from the exercise of his own mind, from the talents with which God has endowed him, and from the decision of others to whose judgment he ought to submit the case.

There must be a movement of his own mind, under the guidance and quickening influence of the Holy Spirit, to the duties of the ministry. From his own experience, and from the word of God, he must have such clear and impressive views of the guilt and danger of mankind as to call forth his compassion to such a degree as to become a principle of action. He must understand and receive all the great doctrines of the gospel with a conception so clear, and a faith so strong as to quiet his own fears of condemnation, and to fill his own bosom with the blessings of hope, with joy and peace in believing. Particularly he will see that the great atonement for sin, made by the death of the Divine Redeemer; the promise of the Holy Spirit; and the very language of the gospel itself, authorize the most earnest invitations to all men to turn unto the Lord, who will have mercy upon them, and to our God who will abundantly pardon. These views of the gospel will point out to him the manner in which his compassion may be usefully employed, and lead him to offer himself as an instrument in the hands of the Spirit to *persuade men.*

But piety, however genuine and sincere, does not alone prove his call to the ministry; in addition to this, he must possess talents, intellectual faculties and bodily powers, which, with proper cultivation, will render him useful in the ministry. If God, in his providence, has withheld from him the requisite powers of body or mind, he cannot be called to this great and arduous work. With serious attention he will observe that while some are *able ministers*

of the New Testament, workmen that *need not be ashamed*, whose labours are calculated to instruct and edify the church, there are others whose imbecility, whose crude ideas, as certainly disgust men of cultivated minds as they grieve the pious and judicious.— His call, therefore, to the ministry, will, in part, be inferred from his possessing those powers of mind and body which are adapted to the work, and which render him *apt to teach*.

He is to submit his call to the judgment of others already in the ministry, whose experience in this good work will enable them to form a more correct decision than he, without this experience, will be able to do. This point is clearly established in the New Testament. Why was it enjoined on Timothy to *lay hands suddenly on no man*, but that he might have time and opportunity to examine the qualifications of the candidate for ordination? Why this delay, if no important purpose was to be gained by it? Urgent as the demand then was for more labourers, yet he must not be in haste to supply this demand; he must, by careful examination, satisfy himself respecting the qualifications of those whom he authorized to teach, lest they should pull down the church which they ought to build up, retard the progress of that kingdom which they ought to advance, and lest he should be a partaker of other men's sins. That which he himself had received he was to commit to *faithful men*, not indiscriminately to every applicant, but to faithful men alone, who might be able to teach others also. But without proof submitted to his examination how could he be assured of this fidelity? He might, and he ought, therefore, to decline giving authority to preach to those who did not, after careful examination, satisfy him respecting their qualifications for the office. And why are the character and qualifications of a bishop described with so much care both to Timothy and Titus, but for their direction in ascertaining who were really called to the ministry, and who were not? Suppose that these instructions were not given to answer this purpose, and you stamp them with futility; but suppose them given with this design, and they fill an important place in the volume of inspiration.

That branch of the christian church to which we belong has embodied these and similar passages of scripture into Constitutional Rules, which make it our duty to examine all candidates for the ministry respecting their qualifications, spiritual, natural, and acquired. The right and the duty to examine, imply the duty of the candidate to submit to this examination. The right to examine is futile unless it implies the right of forming and expressing an opinion in the case. If this opinion should be unfavourable, no candidate can blame us, provided we are honest and impartial, without blaming those rules which give us the right, and prescribe the duty; nor can he blame those rules without including in the same charge those passages of scripture on which they are founded. If this decision is favourable, it will aid the candidate in forming the conclusion that he is indeed called of God, not by an audible voice, but by the voice of the Spirit in changing his heart, by the voice of providence endowing him with natural talents, and by the voice of the church deciding favourably in his case. Thus he is led to de-

sire the good work, and to consecrate himself voluntarily to the service of Christ in the ministry.

2. This is an entire unreserved and unconditional devotedness. That candidate for the ministry has yet to form correct ideas of the transcendent importance of the work in which he is about to engage who is not thoroughly convinced that it requires all his powers of mind and body, during the whole of his life. He does not correctly understand the claims of Jesus Christ upon him if he supposes he may keep back a part of what he professes to dedicate to the Saviour and the church. The examples and the precepts of the New Testament, and especially those of Paul, will bear us fully out on this point. Never was there, and never can there be a man more cordially and more unconditionally devoted to his Lord and Master than was Paul, from the moment of his conversion to the moment of his death. This is obvious from his earnest inquiry—*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* words to which we cannot give the proper emphasis, for want of that light which enlightened his mind, and those powerful feelings which stirred his spirit within him when they were uttered. He feels an ardent, almost an impatient desire to know the path of duty, the manner in which his future life is to be spent. Filled with astonishment, thankfulness and praise that he had not been stricken to perdition, but graciously spared and forgiven, he feels that he is not his own, but entirely at the disposal of his Saviour, whose will, as soon as it is understood, he is ready and determined to follow. Without mental reservation, without implied condition, he devotes himself to the service of his Lord. He does not, even in the most secret wish of his heart, ask that his task may be an easy one, that it should comport with his elevated rank in society, and be honourable in the sight of men, or that it should gratify his refined and literary taste. As soon as he was satisfied that he understood the will of his Master; that his life was to be spent in preaching the gospel; then he furnishes an instructive example of ministerial devotedness. *Immediately*, he informs us, *I conferred not with flesh and blood.* His own ease is no longer a subject of consideration; his own taste is no longer consulted in the discharge of his duty. But particularly he did not consult the opinion of other men; whether they would consider it honourable or dishonourable, follow him with good report or evil report, had no weight with him. He knew the prejudices of the Jew, and the refined though fastidious taste of the Greek; but he neither attempted to accommodate the former, nor to gratify the latter. His convictions were too deep and immoveably fixed to be shaken by the malicious and deadly persecution of the one, or by the scornful derision of the other. He determined to *preach Christ crucified*, though to the one, a stumbling block, and to the other, foolishness; because he knew that this, to those who were called, both Jews and Greeks, would be the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. Though hostile to each other on some accounts, they might unite in casting out his name as evil, in counting him the off-scouring of all things; they might persecute him from city to city, arrest him, scourge him with rods, bind him with chains, cast him into prison, arraign him as a criminal before Councils, before Governors, before Kings, to defend his life; they

might lie in wait, under a solemn oath to murder him, might actually stone him, might thrust him into the arena to fight with wild beasts; yet none of these things, nor all of these things together did move him, or could move him from his purpose. If prudence and wisdom could suggest a way of escape consistently with a good conscience, he readily embraced that way, and escaped the suffering; but if not, if no such way appeared, then he submitted without resentment and without a murmur, and even rejoiced in suffering for Christ's sake. Undismayed he determined to know nothing, and to preach nothing but Christ and him crucified. If others approved and united in the work, he rejoiced; if they condemned, reviled and persecuted, he was unmoved; with increasing diligence and zeal he persevered in the fearless discharge of his duty, and left all the consequences with God. If his life was demanded, it was ready to be offered; he counted it not dear to him compared with the privilege of preaching Christ crucified. All this he would do, and all this he would suffer for the gospel's sake.

The same truth, that ministerial devotedness is entire and unconditional, is taught in the precepts of the New Testament. Paul considered himself *separated unto the gospel.* A blind man is separated from the pleasures of vision, a deaf man from those of hearing; so he could neither see nor hear any thing but what could be made subservient to the great cause for which he lived. The Physician, the Politician, the Merchant, the Farmer, the Mechanic have each their respective and peculiar pursuits; and it is for the interests of society that each one should attend chiefly to the duties of his own profession. The gospel ministry was Paul's profession, the leading business of his life. He had nothing to do with worldly cares and secular pursuits, farther than they could become instrumental in promoting his great and paramount object. His directions to Timothy are to the same effect. After enumerating various duties of the ministry he delivers this plain and positive injunction; *meditate on these things;* or as others think it should be rendered, make these things thy care; *give thyself wholly to them;* be wholly employed in them. He had neither thoughts nor time for cares and pursuits, having no connexion with the ministry, which contributed nothing to promote the Redeemer's kingdom. This he was to do that *his profiting might appear to all.* He was to let others see that he was exclusively engaged in the duties of his office; that neither his time nor his talents were employed in other avocations. This certainly implies entire devotedness to the ministry. The appointment of the seven deacons is also in point. Part of the church murmured *because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.* The twelve Apostles requested the multitude to select *seven men of honest report, whom we may appoint over this business. But we, say they, will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.* They felt themselves devoted to an object far more important than that of distributing alms to the poor widows and members of the church. This, though a religious duty, and closely connected with the prosperity of the church, must be committed to the care of others. They, therefore determined that, *it is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.* If they would not give their time and their atten-

tion to services of this kind, how much less to cares and pursuits of a worldly nature, having no such relation to the interests of the church?

To see the bearing of all this upon ourselves we have only to ask; Has Jesus Christ the same claims upon us that he had on the first messengers of mercy to a perishing world? Are we under as great obligations to him as they were? Is the call for ministerial efforts now as loud and as pressing as that which they heard and obeyed? Does the state of the church and of the world demand as strenuous and unremitting exertions as it did in their day? To these and similar inquiries, but one answer can be given; and that answer proves what our devotedness ought to be. It is not possible that they could be under greater obligations to the Head of the church than we are. We cannot be less indebted than they were to his atoning sacrifice for our hopes of salvation. The calls for ministerial labours which we cannot avoid hearing are loud and very urgent, more than sufficiently so to call forth all our energies both of mind and body. Indeed we cannot, without a bleeding heart, hear, from more than a hundred quarters at once, the Macedonian cry, to which we are compelled to give this answer; We cannot go over and help you, without leaving others as destitute as you are. The state of the church and of the world demands every exertion which can be made. Wherever we may be located, however prosperous the church may there be considered, there are, at our very door, close around us, in our immediate neighbourhood, thousands who need to be instructed, to be warned, to be invited, to be brought into the fold of Christ and trained up for a glorious immortality. There are besides, scattered over the face of the earth, not less than six hundred millions of our fellow beings, heirs with us of the same immortality, needing for their instruction the same gospel, for their pardon the same atoning blood, crowding by thousands every year the passage from time to eternity without the knowledge of the Saviour, and without the well grounded hopes of heaven. That minister of Christ cannot view these things in their true light who concludes that there is not a demand sufficiently urgent for his undivided and zealous exertions; who thinks that a part of his thoughts, and a part of his time are sufficient to employ in this mighty conflict between the powers of light and of darkness. That young man, possessing already, or who might soon acquire sufficient literary qualifications, who has a mind to comprehend and a heart to feel the precious truths of the gospel, and a tongue to proclaim its warnings and its messages of mercy, must be insensible to the noblest emotions of the human soul who can content himself with nothing more than his prayers and good wishes for the success of this cause; who does not join this army whose banner is the cross, whose enemies are the powers of darkness, whose object is the salvation of a world, whose captain is the Lord of hosts, and press with christian fortitude, with ministerial boldness into the front of the battle, resolved to live and die proclaiming Christ and him crucified. Could our voice reach but one such youth, we would say; behold the vineyard, needing labourers; behold the harvest, needing reapers. Do you wish to be useful, most useful to the church and to the world? here is the opportunity; the field for

this usefulness. Do you wish for glory? think of the crown, brightening as you labour, which the Lord will place on your head. Do you wish for happiness? think of the sentence of the Judge, *well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

Judging, therefore, from the examples and precepts of the first ministers of the gospel; from the claims of Jesus Christ upon us; from the state of the church and of the world; we see that our devotedness ought to be entire and unconditional. Our only inquiry should be that of Paul; Lord, what wilt thou have us to do? and we should feel and act as he did, not only a willingness, but a determination to obey that will as soon as it is known. We are not to expect a voice from heaven, or direct suggestions of the spirit, or a man speaking to us in the visions of the night, prescribing the path of our duty, and the field of our labour. We are to ascertain this by the exercise of a sound discretion, carefully and impartially judging of the prospects of usefulness which may be presented to our consideration. If we are willing to labour, the field for this purpose will soon open before us; if it is not at hand, we will soon hear of it at a distance.

There is reason to fear, however, that our devotedness, though professedly entire, may, in fact, and in some degree, be conditional. These conditions may exist and operate when we scarcely perceive them, and will not permit ourselves to believe that they exert any influence on our views and our decisions. It is hard to realize, to bring into actual contact with our feelings a life of penury and suffering. At the moment when we profess a readiness to encounter all this, it is with the conscious hope that we may find a more pleasant path of duty, a field of labour which will yield us, at least, the comforts of life. This hope, as we suppose it to be, and which we consider quite consistent with entire devotedness, if carefully examined, if thoroughly analyzed, may turn out to be a secret, though real, intention not to labour when we have not the prospect of these comforts. On the same principle we may include in our hopes not only the comforts, but also the elegancies of life. Much ingenuity may be exercised in reconciling all this with our entire devotedness to the will of our Master. We may quote, in a sense suited to our purpose, the words of the Saviour himself; *the workman is worthy of his meat.* If he is worthy of it, can he be expected to labour without it? The words of the Apostle may also be introduced; *they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel.* We may fill up the idea expressed by the term living so as to include these comforts or these elegancies. Hence when about to decide on the field of our labour, one inquiry, if not the first, will always be, not what is the urgent demand for ministerial services, what is the prospect of usefulness, but can the means of obtaining these comforts or these elegancies be expected? If the answer to this inquiry is negative, then the call is not heard; we will wait till some prospect more in accordance with our hopes shall open to our view. Now what is this but the practical influence of a real condition? We may conceal it from ourselves, persuade ourselves that no such thing exists, but these are its real effects. We will labour, but we are not willing to suffer, we will labour, indeed, but we must choose the field of this labour; that is, if the Head of the

church will comply with our condition, we will serve him; if he will secure to us the comforts or the elegancies of life, we will devote ourselves to the work of the ministry.

We may be assailed and overcome from another quarter. We may cheerfully commit our condition in life to the will of our Master. But we possess talents, intellectual powers which are the gift of God, and which are given that we may be the more useful to the church. These talents have been improved, these powers increased by literary studies. Those whom we honestly believe to be the best judges in the case, recommend these studies as highly useful, if not indispensably necessary in the ministry. But if these talents and these literary attainments are to render us more useful than we could be without them, they must be fully exercised in the discharge of our duty. But a plain unlettered people, without literary taste and refinement cannot appreciate nor feel the force of these exhibitions; of course, they can derive no benefit from them. These talents and these acquisitions can be of no use to them; to spend our time and our labour among them would, therefore, be to wrap our talent in a napkin and hide it in the earth. We may understand the possession of these talents and these literary acquisitions as an indication of providence that we are to labour among a people who can perceive and feel the force of our connected reasonings, follow us through our profound disquisitions, relish and admire our learning and our eloquence. Hence the pressing cry for ministerial labours from an unlettered people will pass unregarded, will have no influence on us; while a gentle whisper, a single hint from those of refined taste will swell in our ears into a loud and imperious call. What is this, again, but the practical effect of a condition? We may blush to acknowledge it, even to ourselves; but here is the proof of its existence and its influence. Provided we are permitted to select our audience, we will employ our time, our talents and our learning in the ministry.

But there is another condition, in all probability more common, because much more plausible, and therefore less likely to be detected, than either of the former: It is this; that our labours may be crowned with success, that we may be instrumental in the conversion of sinners. While in our anxious bosoms the great question was yet undecided; is it our duty, are we under solemn obligations to devote ourselves to the Saviour in the ministry of the gospel; we recollect the weight which desires of this kind had on our mind; to be instrumental in changing the destiny of immortal souls from deep and everlasting perdition to endless and ineffable glory and joy. It then appeared a rich reward for all our labour if we might be instrumental in bringing but one single sinner to Heaven, though the most obscure individual on the face of the globe, who would otherwise have perished. These considerations exerted a mighty and controlling influence in our understandings and our hearts. We could find nothing, we could conceive of nothing that could outweigh them. The wealth, the pleasures, the honors of the world were light when laid in the balance with them. That this success ought to be an object of desire, of intense desire, is admitted; no man whose frozen soul was never warmed, whose spirit was never stirred within him by this desire is worthy the name of ambassador

of Christ. But did we, or could we consistently make it a condition of our devotedness to the ministry? No more than we could make the wealth or the honor of this world such a condition. The very idea of condition, let it be what it may, contradicts the declaration that, *we are not our own.* So far as we may propose a condition, so far we are our own.—But the claims of Jesus Christ are absolute and perfect; when we devote ourselves to him most unreservedly, we offer him nothing that is not his own. If we could make the conversion of even one sinner a condition, we might, on the same principle, extend it to ten, to an hundred, to a thousand, to millions, to the whole world. If we may make this condition, then we may complain, if it is not complied with; and this complaint must be brought against Him, with whom we made this engagement. If we have no right to make this complaint, neither have we, to make this condition. If, while we were yet revolving the question in our mind, it had been made known to us with all the certainty of prophetic vision, that we would not be instrumental in saving even one sinner, would this have changed our decision? If it would; if we would have devoted ourselves either not at all, or less cheerfully; if we would have preached less earnestly and plainly, and laboured less faithfully; then, this degree of success was a condition of our devotedness. And if we might make the salvation of one sinner a condition, we might have included in our condition the whole world; and if we might have thus secured the salvation of the world, we were criminal if we did not. If this want of success had been revealed to us, this would not, in the least, have diminished the claims of Jesus Christ on us, nor weakened our obligations to him; it would not have deprived us of those powers which he had given us, nor lessened the pressing demand for our exertions. While these remained unaltered, the reasons for our devotedness were the same. We wish and intend to state nothing but truth; we can take no other view of this interesting subject.

Paul made no such condition. The earnest, the impassioned inquiry which he made was unconditional. When informed that he was to preach the gospel, he commenced and persevered in the faithful discharge of his duty, leaving it with God to *give the increase.* Though pre-eminently successful, not behind the very chiefest Apostle in the conversion of sinners, yet all he could say of many who heard him was, that the gospel was unto them the *savour of death unto death.* He did not, however, by any means consider his preaching in vain which only aggravated the guilt of impenitent sinners; it was *unto God a sweet savour of Christ,* even in those who perished in unbelief. This is the mistake which has probably led many a sincerely pious man to make, without being fully aware of it, the success of his ministry in the conversion of sinners a condition of his devotedness. He considers all his preaching and his labours lost and in vain which are not attended with these visible effects. This, however, is impossible. No faithful preaching can, or will be lost. It will, if not in the salvation, most certainly in the condemnation of sinners who refuse to repent, who persevere in unbelief, promote the glory of God; the grand object for which the universe was created, and for which the Saviour died.

Such is ministerial devotedness: voluntary; unreserved, unconditional, entire. The man is ready and determined to obey the will of his Master as soon and as far as he understands it. In obedience to this supreme authority he will visit any region, will occupy any station where he can most promote the interests of piety, be it honorable or dishonorable, in good report or evil report, in plenty or in want; will minister to the rich or to the poor, the learned or the unlearned; will perform any labours, endure any sufferings, make any sacrifices for the gospel's sake.

II. We proceed to offer a few remarks on this part of the subject. What effects will this devotedness have on the mind; and what will be the proofs of its existence and degree? It will exert a transforming and controling power on the spirit, a decisive and commanding influence on the life. It will cast down those imaginations, and every high thing that would exalt itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. It will give not only the general pursuit, but the individual actions of life an obvious relation to the sacred office. Its existence and degree will be manifested to others chiefly by the sacrifices which it leads us to make.

1. It will lead us cheerfully and conscientiously to sacrifice many of those feelings which are justified by the spirit and maxims of the world, and some of those which even the christian community would authorize us to cherish. *A bishop must be blameless;* must *have a good report of those who are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil;* he must be *gentle unto all men, patient, in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves;* he must be an *example of believers in charity, in spirit,* as well as in *faith and purity.* He is to *give no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed;* he is to approve himself as the minister of God by *long suffering* and by *kindness.* Those precepts belong exclusively to the ministers of the gospel; they are their peculiar inheritance; they are the mould into which their spirit is to be cast, that from hence it may receive all its impressions, its characteristic features.

To maintain this spirit will require no little watchfulness and prayer, no little self-denial and sacrifice of feeling. We will see and hear many things which will call for meekness, forbearance and forgiveness. Both we and our families will be considered, in a certain sense, public property; the licensed objects of censure, which some, from the relation they sustain to us, will consider themselves authorized to administer. We may learn, in a variety of ways, by more than dubious hints, that our support, whatever it may be, is a work of charity; that we are a kind of paupers, fed and cloathed by the liberality of our people; that although our Judges, our Lawyers, our Legislators, and our Physicians are justly entitled to a liberal compensation for their services; yet our services, altho' we should be wholly devoted to them, are not of such importance, have no such value, as to entitle us, on the principles of justice, to receive any compensation. When it is given, therefore, it is done with an expectation, not always concealed, that we ought to be thankful for this charity. Of those who act with us, and even of the flock committed to our care, some will entertain views and opinions different

from our own. Calm inquiry, kind and mild persuasion on the subject of difference may verge into animated debate, into heated controversy, into hostile and angry conflict. By those with whom we differ, the most awful prerogative of God may be assumed, our hearts may be searched, and we may be charged with acting from prejudice, from selfishness, perhaps from resentment. Nameless and numerous trials of this kind will assail us, calculated to prove what manner of spirit we are of to shew how much, or how little we can bear for the gospel's sake.

If we belonged to the world the case would be a very plain one; its maxims and its spirit would not only permit, but even require us to redress our own grievances, to become our own avengers.— We would be branded with pusillanimity, with meanness, if we did not make those who take such liberties with our character feel the heat and the weight of our resentment. Were we to take as our pattern, some members of the church, some who profess to imitate the meek and lowly Saviour, we would be justified, if not in actual retaliation, yet in cherishing, without the least effort to conceal them, the feelings of dislike and resentment. But as ministers of the gospel, as cities set on a hill, as the lights of the world, as examples for the imitation of others, how ought we to feel? Certainly not the least degree of anger, of resentment, of dislike or coldness ought to be cherished in our hearts. Nothing but meekness, patience, forbearance, kindness and forgiveness will answer the demands, under these and all similar trials, of the precepts above quoted. These precepts make no more allowance for hard and extreme cases than for slighter provocations. When we devoted ourselves to the ministry we renounced entirely and forever the privilege, as some consider it, of indulging these unhallowed feelings. The moment we cherish them, that moment we renounce our ministerial obligations, forget our responsibility, in this particular at least, and adopt the maxims and the principles of the world. The slightest degree of those feelings will spread itself like an atmosphere before the mind, perverting and magnifying the real or supposed injury we have received; this perversion of the offence will increase the feeling; until from a very small beginning, increasing by degrees almost or quite imperceptible to ourselves, we reach a crisis which will be the grief and astonishment of others who view things stript of those exaggerations and perversions which operate so powerfully on our own minds. We may, in our own estimation, not have departed from the correct course; we may be honestly following the convictions of our own mind; while these convictions themselves may be erroneous, not the result of calm and patient inquiry, but of passion. If these feelings of irritation, of resentment are indulged, they cannot be entirely concealed; some external evidence of them will be given. This will be noticed as inconsistent with our profession and our duty; and will not fail to limit our usefulness. We will no longer be considered *blameless;* that *good report*, which we ought so carefully to maintain, even *of those who are without*, much more of those who are within the church, will be lost. No longer will we be *examples of believers in spirit*, in the temper of our mind, in the diligence with which we keep our hearts. Our reproofs and exhortations to

amendment may be met with the proverb; *physician, heal thyself.* Nor ought we to complain of its application if we exhibit such evidence of unguarded, of unhallowed feeling. Especially those with whom we may unhappily differ will be likely to consider our preaching as pointed at them. The suspicion may fix itself in their mind, that we are converting the warnings and reproofs of the gospel into weapons of rather a carnal warfare against them, into measures of retaliation and self-defence. Wherever this suspicion is planted, our usefulness is at an end; we speak to deaf ears; we aim to impress hearts shielded on every side. One of the precepts above quoted relates to this very case; to those who oppose themselves. To those especially we should be gentle, patient, in meekness instructing them.

Besides; the gospel which is committed to us is indeed a treasure, a rich and invaluable treasure; but *we have this treasure in earthen vessels*; we make no pretensions to infallibility. We may, therefore, form erroneous opinions and cherish improper feelings; under their influence we may act improperly. This impropriety of conduct will more likely be observed by others than ourselves. The remarks of which we complain may be on this very account, and may be intended for our benefit. In that case, thankfulness, not irritation or resentment, is the feeling we should cherish. If we have acted improperly we ought to reform; *in all things shewing ourselves a pattern of good works; that those who are of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of us.* But if, after impartial and prayerful examination, we discover nothing but those imperfections and failings which are causes of grief and confession between us and our God; if this evil speaking, this reproach, this reviling is solely because we are ministers of Jesus Christ, and as such faithfully attempting to discharge our duty; then the case is a very plain one: in the midst of these trying circumstances, assailed by these provocations, we are bound by solemn and sacred obligations, the vows of God are upon us, to cherish meekness without irritation, forbearance without threatening, long-suffering without impatience or complaint, gentleness without severity, kindness without dislike, forgiveness without resentment. Let us not say, this is hard; for it is hard only so far as we consider and feel the precepts of the gospel as irksome restraints. We might have escaped all this by adopting some other pursuit in life; if such should be our choice, we might even now escape it by forsaking our office. But if we say, *nay, but we will serve the Lord* in the ministry, let us not think it hard to cherish that spirit and maintain that deportment which will fit us for the work. It is, therefore, repeated with emphasis; if we ever had the right, as the men of the world say they have, and as some professed christians seem to think they have, of resenting real or supposed injuries, we have, by devoting ourselves to the ministry, entirely and forever renounced that right.

2. If we are truly devoted to the ministry we will cheerfully sacrifice for the gospel's sake the love and the desire for popularity, for distinction among men. The testimony of a good conscience, the approbation of our Divine Master will be the distinction which we desire; both of which are to be secured by the faithful and per-

severing discharge of our duty in that station to which we are led by the providence of God. Some churches are located in large and populous and wealthy cities, where men of literature, of cultivated minds and refined taste are numerous. These stations are, in fact, more distinguished by these circumstances than many others.—But without going beyond the pale of our own communion for proof, we have reason to believe that they are as perilous as they are distinguished. The very circumstances which impart to them all their distinction are obstructions to ministerial fidelity, and steps, it may be imperceptible steps, to ministerial delinquencies. Instead of its being easier, it is, therefore, more difficult, in such stations, to secure the approbation of our Judge, than in those which are comparatively obscure; and if we desire any thing as our distinction more than his approbation, that desire, let it prove what else it may, does not prove our sincere devotedness to the ministry. If we desire such stations chiefly, or in part, on account of these worldly considerations, we furnish much stronger proof of our unfitness for them, than of that humility and sound integrity of heart which would be our greatest protection from those perils with which we would there be surrounded. If these stations are more elevated than others, they are the more dangerous, and we would be the more likely to fall; and our fall from such an elevation would be the more conspicuous and deplorable. These stations, however, must be occupied; and if called in the providence of God to fill them, we ought not to shrink from the labour and the watchfulness which they require. Other stations are far remote from the crowded population, the wealth and splendor of cities; and are, for this reason, considered obscure. These we should be willing and ready to occupy in obedience to the divine will. Here we may find labour sufficient to employ our whole time, with less that is calculated to divide our attention from the work. Here, uninfluenced by the parade of wealth, unembarrassed by the pressure of literary men, too often better critics of logical discussion than of evangelical preaching, unassailed by the temptations peculiar to more conspicuous stations, we may give our whole efforts to the ministry of the gospel in all its simplicity and in all its purity. And here too, if found faithful, we will enjoy the solace of a good conscience, and all the animating influence of hope inspired by the approbation of heaven, in as great a degree as those possibly can who are called to labour in stations far more elevated in human estimation. When these subjects are viewed in their true light; in their intimate connexion with the decisions of the last great day, when all other distinctions shall vanish away except that arising from the approbation of the Judge; and when this approbation will be in proportion, not to the notice and applause of men, received in this life, not to the earthly splendors in the midst of which we have laboured, but to the prudence, humility and zeal with which we persevered in our labour; when these things are duly considered, thankfulness, instead of regret should fill our hearts, if called, if permitted, to exercise our ministry where there is less peril, though there should be less worldly distinction. That place is not, and cannot be obscure on which the cheering rays of the divine approbation continually shine; and they always shine on the faithful pastor, the de-

voted minister of the gospel. We ought, above all others, to *walk by faith, not by sight.* From human estimation various subjects derive an importance which is altogether fictitious and delusive, which is, therefore, an unsafe and dangerous guide. Faith, that is, a deep, an abiding and practical sense of spiritual and divine things, will preserve us from this danger, by leading us to desire supremely the work and the approbation of our Master in heaven.

Again; sincere devotedness will preserve us from an undue thirst for literary fame, as men of profound and extensive learning. By this remark it is not intimated that ignorance is a qualification for the ministry, or that a mind undisciplined by studious habits can make full proof of the ministry. Let us possess these important aids to the work, but exclude from our hearts all desire for distinction on this account. There are stations in the church which not only permit, but require the exercise of sound and extensive learning; and those who are called to fill them should bring to the work all the helps which literature and science can furnish, resolved that no man shall despise them on account of deficiencies which they cannot conceal. They should be prepared to wrest from the hands of lettered opponents the weapons which they wield against christianity, and to employ them in defence of Christ and his cause. But this they should do, not for their own, but for the gospel's sake, that they may be the more useful. There are other stations to be occupied where the proper use of learning will be different from the former; where no controversies requiring deep discussion exist; where no learned investigations are needed; where the great truths of the gospel in all their connexions, and all their bearings on life and on death, on time and eternity, are to be explained and enforced with a perspicuity and simplicity that the most ignorant will be instructed, that the weakest capacity may comprehend them. This task, performed as it is to be, without ostentation, without parade, will require all the learning we can possess. While the hearers are thus instructed and edified, the idea of learning, to which they are so much indebted, will scarcely be suggested to their thoughts; and they will be almost persuaded that they could speak in the same manner. There are many places where this is the only use that ought to be made of learning; any other is a perversion, an abuse of this powerful aid to the cause of vital piety.

Paul has left us a noble and striking example of this kind. At one time we see him before the grand Council, the Sanhedrim of the Jews, where all the learning of his country was concentrated, himself equal to the most learned of them all. At another, we find him in the presence of kings and governors, making them tremble with his powerful reasonings and appeals to the conscience. Again we hear him explaining and defending the gospel in the midst of Mars-hill, before the most learned assembly, at that day, in the world. Again we find this same Paul praying with a company of women by the river's side, explaining to them the plan of salvation. On another occasion he is employing all his learning and all the powers of his great mind in giving instruction to a fugitive slave; nor gives up the task till he sees the Saviour's image traced on the heart of his pupil. Such was Paul's devotedness; and such ought to be ours.

Nor ought we to convert that opposition with which we may have to contend, or those ill natured and reproachful remarks which may be made respecting us, into marks of distinction. Expecting no great prominency amongst men from the faithful, though silent, discharge of duty, we may glory in this opposition and these reprehensive remarks as proof of our zeal. We may act under the influence of this erroneous opinion, that unless we meet with opposition, our ministry cannot be useful. This opposition, though it consists in nothing but evil speaking, in finding fault with some part of our conduct or ministerial service, we call by the name of persecution; and then rank ourselves, and conceive that we ought to be ranked by others, with Apostles and Martyrs who actually have suffered persecution even unto death. This savours more of weakness and vanity than of humility and christian fortitude. In our happy country, persecution, on account of religion, is impossible. If we regard the correct use of language, if we regard the distinction so carefully drawn by our Saviour himself, we will never advance this claim of distinction. This evil speaking may be called forth by our own rashness, indiscretion and impropriety of conduct; if so, we ought to be ashamed and grieved instead of being lifted up. Let us not glory in our shame. If it be indeed for righteousness' sake, then let us bear it patiently and silently; let us not proclaim it to the world, lest by others we should be suspected of vanity and self conceit; a suspicion which cannot fail to limit our usefulness. If there is one manner of discharging our duty with fidelity less likely to give offence and excite unpleasant feelings than another, we cannot neglect this manner and be innocent; we are bound to give no offence, if it can possibly can be avoided, in any thing. We ought never to think the precept given in vain; *be ye, therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.* Fidelity will as readily unite with this wisdom as with inconsiderate rashness and blind indiscretion. Earnestness will combine as readily, and with much better effect, with meekness, with kindness, with tenderness as with irritation, with harshness, with unfeeling severity. Instead of supposing that opposition, that evil speaking will promote our usefulness, let us rather believe, in perfect accordance with the precepts of the gospel, that a blameless life and a good report of those who are without will have this effect; and be, at the same time, a much more unequivocal proof of our devotedness to the cause of Christ.

3. If we are sincerely and unreservedly devoted to the ministry we will cheerfully sacrifice for the gospel's sake the wealth of this world; and with the same cheerfulness the elegancies, the conveniences and the comforts of this life. As these comforts can only be obtained by some degree of wealth, in renouncing the one with uncomplaining acquiescence, we renounce the others also. In devoting ourselves to the Saviour we take his word of promise for our security that he will, in his wise and good providence, supply our wants, will provide for us and our families. To encourage this confidence, he has told us that, *the earth is the Lord's, with the fullness thereof;* that *the silver and the gold are his;* and also that the dispositions of the heart are subject to his control. If our time, our talents and our learning are exclusively employed in the

various duties of our office, we furnish visible proof to men, and if sincere, proof that will bear the divine inspection, that we do rely on his word, that we depend on his providence alone for our worldly maintenance. But if we employ a part of our time and our thoughts in secular pursuits with the view of supplying apprehended deficiencies, this will prove, either a want of confidence in the pledge of our Master, or an unwillingness to deny ourselves these comforts for the gospel's sake; neither of which can easily be reconciled with true devotedness to the ministry. There are, indeed, cases so strongly marked, of such obvious necessity as not only to admit, but even to require our attention to some worldly occupation. If the Macedonian cry should reach us from such places, we ought to go *without gainsaying*, without *consulting with flesh and blood*, and labour *working with our own hands*, rather than not enjoy the privilege of preaching the gospel to those who are *perishing for lack of knowledge*. In places of this kind our earthly toils will prove that we correctly understand the providence of God, and that we exercise a scriptural trust in his word. In these cases the temporal avocation will be for the gospel's sake, not for self-indulgence. We ought, however, to beware that we do not put a wrong construction on the dispensations of providence which surround us; that those circumstances from which we infer the permission, or perhaps the call to engage in secular pursuits, may not, in reality, be intended as a trial of our faith, to ascertain how far we are willing to deny ourselves and even suffer for the cause of Christ. Circumstances may, in human probability, be very unpromising, and seem to call for large curtails from our conveniences and our comforts, and yet not justify such an inference. Before we stamp our worldly employments with the character of duty, we ought first to make a full and fair experiment on the principles of the gospel. This experiment will not be fairly made till we have practised self-denial, and exercised economy in every item of expenditure, as far as possible, without incurring the charge or exciting the suspicion of niggardliness, or rendering ourselves less acceptable, of course, less useful to the people. This experiment will include an honest and candid appeal to those among whom we minister. We should let them see that for their spiritual benefit we employ our whole time in *reading*, in *meditation*, in *prayer*, and in the *ministry of the word;* that as we serve at the altar, we depend on the altar for our support; that as we minister to them in spiritual things, we trust to their sense of religious obligation, to their obedience to the authority of Christ, to their love of the gospel, to supply us with carnal things. In this manner we should let them see that if they choose to furnish us with the means, we will enjoy, within the bounds of moderation, the comforts of life; but if they choose to deny us these comforts by withholding these means, we will submit to the deprivation, and cheerfully make the sacrifice that we may promote their spiritual interest. If this appeal is fairly and honestly made, it will not be without effect. But if, without waiting to make it, we engage in some business of a worldly nature, and thereby, though tacitly, and indirectly, yet really manifest our distrust of their readiness and willingness to obey the plain precepts of the gospel, and our intention to deprive them of a

part of our time and our thoughts in order to supply the deficiency occasioned by their neglect, we withhold from them the motives which would otherwise be presented to their minds. When they see that we take the work of providing for our support out of their hands into our own; that we are unwilling to sacrifice any of the comforts of life which others enjoy; that we are disposed to imitate, if not equal, the elegancies of the wealthy; they will consider this as releasing them from those religious obligations under which they might otherwise act, and which might prompt them to do for us what we have undertaken to do for ourselves. They will in vain be expected to act, in any case, without motives, bearing on their minds, sufficient to produce the effect. Besides, it is well if this division of our time, this premature engagement in worldly pursuits, does not excite the suspicion that our devotedness to the gospel is not so entire as to exclude a love for the comforts, the elegancies of this world nearly as ardent as our love for the work of the ministry; and they will, therefore, not feel bound to furnish the means of gratifying this desire. Whereas, if we gave our undivided efforts to the duties of our office; if we cast ourselves entirely on their sense of religious obligation; we might experience a different result; a result which would take away the necessity of engaging in any other labours than those of our sacred vocation. If this experiment and this appeal are fairly made, and the necessity of providing for our subsistence still remains, with a good conscience we can then engage in those cares which, though of a worldly nature, will be for the gospel's sake.

Let not these remarks be misunderstood. There is no necessary connexion between poverty and fidelity in the discharge of ministerial duties. Nor is it intended to join the cry sometimes raised against us of preaching for money, because we openly, and without disguise, refer to the well known precepts of the gospel as our authority for expecting a comfortable maintenance from those to whom we minister in spiritual things; and because we receive this maintenance, not on the principles of alms-giving, but on the principles of that justice which has the Bible itself for its basis. We are quite as far from offering an apology for that people who have it in their power, and yet neglect to give a comfortable support to him who *watches for their souls*, who labours among them *in word and in doctrine*. We shall never excuse any man, or any people, in wilfully transgressing the precepts of the gospel. If called to labour where the comforts of life are afforded, we may, within the bounds of reason, enjoy them. If called to labour where the means of procuring more than the comforts, the elegancies of life are furnished; then it will be a question for our decision in what manner we can best dispose of the surplus; in equalling the wealthy in the richness of our dress and our furniture; or, by reducing our style of living to that plainness and simplicity which will secure us from all suspicion of parsimony, be perfectly consistent with our usefulness, and thus obtain the privilege of aiding those Societies whose object is to diffuse the knowledge of the Saviour through the world.

Shall we learn from the example of Paul what is our duty? In a life of suffering for the gospel's sake he is second to none, except

the Author Himself of this gospel. Sometimes, indeed, we see him receiving aid from the churches until he is full, and even abounding in the comforts of life. At another time we see him *labouring with his own hands* for his subsistence. Again we see him in circumstances when neither the aid of the church nor the labour of his own hands can prevent his suffering *hunger* and *thirst*. At another time we see him *naked;* not literally so, but without that clothing which was comfortable, or such as those in easy circumstances or in wealth were in the habit of wearing. Yet no man, hearing from his lips the sublime strains of evangelical truth, could despise him on this account. When he delivered his warnings and his invitations, he furnished other employment for the thoughts than to notice the deficiency or the plainness of his dress. Without any settled residence, in perils, sometimes by land, sometimes by sea, we see him constantly pressing forward in the zealous discharge of his duty, counting not even his life dear to him, but willing, at any moment, to lay it down, rather than relinquish the great and glorious cause in which he was embarked. As far as sincere obedience to the law of Christ would permit, he became *all things to all men, that he might by all means save some.* By rashness or by indiscretion he invited no evil speaking, no reviling; he provoked no persecution for the sake of distinction. When these trials assailed him in the faithful discharge of his duty, they always found him firm and unyielding. His path, though often marked with sufferings, with tears and with blood, was to him a joyful one; because it was traced before him by the wisdom of his Saviour, and because it conducted him at every step, nearer and nearer to a *crown of life* the glory of which *fadeth not away.*

With such an instructive example before us, can we, my brethren in the ministry, complain of the privations, the sufferings which we may be called to endure? They will not, they cannot be equal to those of Paul, in the midst of which he laboured and rejoiced. The same world which *lieth in ruin*, the wants and the miseries of which so powerfully *stirred his spirit within him*, lies before us, and around us. To this world let us count it a privilege to preach *the unsearchable riches of Christ*; and not only without complaint, but with joyous acquiescence and humble confidence, leave ourselves and our families to the care of Him to whom we are devoted. Both for us and for them He will provide, as seems best to his infinite wisdom. If, when we come to bid our families a last adieu on the bed of death, we have little or none of the wealth of this world to leave them, we can commend them to the kindness and protection of the Saviour, to the guardian care of a merciful God. In devoting ourselves to the service of Jesus Christ, we devote also our families, as it regards their condition in this life. If, in consequence of this devotedness, we have no earthly portion to leave them, it lays us under the stronger and more endearing obligation to commend them in prayer, in faith, and with our dying breath, to Him whose blessing will be a portion richer far, and more invaluable, than thousands of wealth without this blessing. Leaving them thus destitute to the kindness of heaven does not imply a want of affection for our beloved families; it only implies a stron-

ger, a more constraining affection for Christ, and for perishing sinners.

From the preceding remarks two reflections present themselves, which, for a moment, will claim our attention.

I. The great importance, in addition to fervent and scriptural piety, of a sound and well cultivated mind in a minister of the gospel. Genius, or extraordinary talents are very rare; and unless connected with deep humility and sincere devotion, are not the most useful in the church. Was the ministry committed to none who did not possesss intellectual powers of this high order, the world would perish in ignorance. A man of a sound mind is one who can form clear and distinct conceptions on those subjects which come within the range of his knowledge; and who knows the boundaries which limit this knowledge, beyond which investigation is useless. Wisdom will arrest his inquiries the moment he reaches this boundary, and turn them back into that field, sufficiently wide to employ his whole life, where they will be repaid with useful results. He is a man of patient investigation, carefully examining and giving due weight to evidence on both sides of the question, on which he is to form his decision. Truth alone is his object. Whim and caprice are not his guide in forming conclusions which are to become principles of action, and which are to regulate his life. When his convictions are once formed they remain unshaken, however severely tried, unless by the power of additional light reaching his mind. Prudence will be an obvious characteristic of his mind. He will carefully consider the different dispositions, characters and circumstances of those for whose spiritual improvement he labours. Because one kind and manner of address has been useful to one person, under particular circumstances, he will not therefore use it to all other persons, in different circumstances. This, united with zeal, will regulate his conversation, his preaching and his life.

This mind, to render it most useful, ought to be well cultivated. It is not possible to fix on any particular degree of literary attainments as a qualification for the ministry. It is quite easy to specify the sciences which are to be studied, the authors to be read, and the time to be spent in these pursuits. Different minds, however, may comply with these requisitions with very different degrees of useful attainment. The design of education, is not only to store the mind with knowledge, but to strengthen and quicken its powers of perception, to confirm its habits of close thinking, of patient investigation and correct decision. When education has produced these effects, the mind is then well cultivated. It will feel dissatisfied when its ideas are confused and obscure, and not less so with its decisions and conclusions while their correctness is doubtful. Such a mind is prepared for useful investigation; and by such investigation its views will be enlarged, and its stock of knowledge increased. The study of languages, and especially of mathematical sciences, is, for this reason, highly important, if not indispensably necessary, in the cultivation of the mind. Proficiency in these studies cannot be made without habits of close thinking, and of observing the connexion between cause and effect, and between the conclusion and the premises from whence it is derived. In

examining candidates for the ministry these effects should be the criterion of qualification, rather than the number of books read, or the time spent in study.

Now, that a minister of the gospel should possess a mind thus sound and well cultivated is obvious; because he is to be the interpreter of divine providence. His call to the ministry is to be inferred, in part from the voice of providence: This voice is not uttered in articulate sounds addressed to his ear, but in facts and in circumstances addressed to his understanding, requiring much prayerful attention, much calm and patient investigation. Each of these facts and circumstances are to be considered and weighed separately, and then collectively, in order to reach a correct decision. This decision is the most important on which the human mind can deliberate; involving not only his own individual happiness, but also the spiritual and eternal interest of hundreds, perhaps thousands of others. Judging of the facts and circumstances belonging to his case, others may pronounce in favour of his call; this, though it may aid him, will not supersede the necessity for his own inquiry and thoughtfulness; the decision, by whatever means he may be assisted in forming it, must be emphatically his own. His devotedness must be voluntary. So far as this call is inferred from the voice of providence its claims on the attention of others are enforced with the authority of God himself. If he calls one man to preach the gospel, he as certainly, and by the same authority calls others to hear and receive this preaching. Surely, then, this question requires the exercise of a sound mind. No doubt there are hundreds plainly and loudly called to the ministry by the voice of providence, who, either from inattention to this voice, or mistaking its meaning, are engaged, usefully it may be, in secular pursuits; but who ought to be employed in the more useful labour of calling sinners to repentance, of guiding and cheering believers on their way to heaven. It is equally certain that some, never called by this voice, have thrust themselves into the sacred office who ought to be employed, and who might have been useful in some honest business of life for which they are fitted. It is afflictive to witness some minds, characterized by imbecility, or guided by vanity, by selfishness, by whim or caprice, alleging the authority of God, expressed in his providence, as their call to the ministry, and their claims on the attention of men. It is equally so to see others possessing both intellectual and literary qualifications for the work, turning, it is to be feared, a deaf ear to this voice, and dismissing the cries of a perishing world as the cold hearted do those of the naked and the hungry; *be ye warmed, and be ye fed;* be ye instructed and be ye saved, but they put not forth their strength in this *work and labour of love.*

After this important decision is made, and he has devoted himself to the ministry, the field of his labour is to be ascertained in the same way; from the leadings of divine providence. Of the various places calling for his services, he can supply but one at the same time. These claims may be nearly equal, and may, therefore, occasion much perplexity; yet no voice from heaven relieves him from this state of suspense; his own judgment, with such aid as he can obtain, must decide the question and determine where

it is his duty to labour. On this point it is highly important that his decision should be correct; that it should be the will of God, and not his own inclination that he obeys. Wherever it is the divine will that he should labour, there he may expect to be most useful, and to find the most comfort in the ministry. After being settled in one place, having sustained the relation of pastor to one people, it may become his duty to remove to another. This case, too, is to be decided by the prayerful consideration of all the particulars belonging to it. To justify a removal requires clearer indications of providence than his first location. If he has been useful there will be an attachment formed to him on account of that usefulness of a spiritual and endearing nature, to which he ought not to do violence, except in obedience to the most imperious calls of duty, derived from the high probability, if not the certainty of greater usefulness elsewhere. He ought not only to be satisfied himself that it is the path of duty which he follows, but the circumstances should be so clear as to be calculated to satisfy others also on this point. Without this satisfaction, the suspicion will arise that he is influenced, not by a sense of duty, but by selfish motives. This suspicion will be unfavourable to his usefulness with those who entertain it. It ought to be his earnest prayer to err on neither side; not to leave a flock with whom he ought to remain, to feed and to guide; and not to remain a moment after the finger of providence points him away to another place.

Again; the minister of the gospel is to be the interpreter of the Bible; and this requires a sound and well cultivated mind. This holy book contains a great and glorious system of truth which has God for its author, all the parts of which are in close connexion and perfect harmony with each other. This system, containing the only information we possess respecting the invisible world, the only instruction which can *make wise unto salvation*, embraces an endless variety of objects, transcendant in their importance to men, extending in their results through an endless duration. It also contains the history of man from the creation to the consummation of all things; and in addition to this, the history of man's redemption through a crucified Saviour; the greatest and the most glorious work of God. It is often illustrated by a reference to manners and customs entirely different from our own; it abounds in figures characterized by all the boldness of oriental imagery; it is written in languages not spoken at this day by any people, the idioms of which are peculiar and different from our own. One part is preceptive, another doctrinal, another devotional, another historical. It was delivered at different periods of the world, on different occasions, by men of different characters and occupations in life; yet all converging to one point, the cross of a Divine Saviour; intended to accomplish one purpose, the salvation of sinners; ultimately tending to one grand and sublime result, the display of the divine glory. The messenger of mercy goes forth to the world to explain this system of truth, and bring it fairly and fully to bear on the minds of men, in all its connexions and in all its harmony. If his views are contracted; if his attention should be chiefly directed to certain parts of this system, his expositions will most probably be at variance, perhaps utterly inconsistent with other parts of the same

system. In this way he may become the founder, or the zealous advocate of a party; and those whom he instructs may become bigoted and intolerant sectarians, using their own shibboleth, and adopting the peculiar and contracted views of their teacher as the only criterion of religious sentiment and practice, may deal out their anathemas against those who differ from them. He may so gloss and warp other parts as to give them the appearance of consistency with his peculiarities. The remedy for these evils which the world has witnessed and the church has felt and lamented is, that in addition to piety, he should possess a sound and well cultivated mind, capable of taking large and comprehensive views of divine truth, not mistaking a part for the whole, and expecting effects from that part which can only result from the combined influence of the whole. He will explain one part in perfect consistency with every other. His great object will be that those whom he instructs shall become genuine christians, not narrow-hearted sectarians; that their religious character should be formed by the influence of truth as a system; that in their minds the *word of Christ should dwell*, not in detached parts, but *richly, in all wisdom*, and in perfect harmony.

Another cause of grievance to the pious and judicious which has often been witnessed, proving the great importance of a sound and well cultivated mind in a minister of the gospel is this; passages of scripture confessedly obscure in their meaning, or merely historical, are so tortured and shamefully treated as to be made to teach doctrines which no man of common understanding ever supposed they contained. In this way a whole system is derived from a passage giving a plain narrative of facts, intended to answer no purpose beyond that of history; or from some prophecy designedly so obscure that it cannot be understood until it is accomplished. This fanciful and whimsical method of interpreting scripture can have no excuse; for every doctrine, and every duty claiming the attention of christians, is plainly and purposely taught in numerous passages relating to these subjects alone. It is owing to ignorance or vanity, often, perhaps, to a mixture of both. If to ignorance, the man ought to be returned to the care of some judicious instructer till his mind is so far improved that he can perceive the difference between plain truth and mere fancy and whim; between what a passage of scripture teaches and what it does not teach. If to vanity, then he ought to be required to meditate exclusively on those subjects which are calculated to remove this blotch of character, until he is *clothed with humility*. If he will not submit to the remedy, or if he cannot derive benefit from its application, then he manifests such intellectual and moral blemishes as ought to exclude him from the ministry.

Another method of interpretation is sometimes observed. The meaning of the passage is correctly given, but its application is extended beyond those limits within which it ought to be confined. It is the peculiar excellence of the Bible that it is adapted to all ages, and to all circumstances of the church. But from this it follows, that those passages which are adapted to peculiar circumstances will not be applicable under others entirely different.—That which is peculiarly suited to cheer and support the heart in a

state of affliction, will not have the same effect in prosperity. In primitive times the exigencies of the church required the working of miracles; this power, was, therefore, given to some of the disciples, accompanied with special directions for the exercise of this gift. These directions are sometimes given without any limitation, except what the nature of the case itself will suggest. How absurd would it not, then, be to pretend that these instructions were of universal application in all ages, and under all circumstances? The purpose to be answered by miracles having been fully accomplished, this power has long since been withdrawn; for God works no useless miracles. The man, therefore, who pretends, at this day, to act under these directions and exercise this power, makes large calculations on the credulity of mankind, and certainly exposes his own ignorance and vain presumption.

Take another instance. The church has often been called to suffer persecution, bitter, cruel and deadly persecution. This state of things, foretold by the Saviour, was too interesting to be passed over without special provision; without something peculiarly calculated to direct, encourage, and support those who were called to suffer these fiery trials. Will it, however, be doing justice to the sacred volume, will it be giving a true and fair exposition of its meaning, to make these passages applicable in time of exemption from persecution? Paul assured Timothy that *all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.* Because there is no limitation expressed, some understand this as of universal application; and, of course, make it a criterion of a life of scriptural piety. Those who so understand and apply it, in this country, must, of course, find persecution among us, or deny that there are any who live godly in Christ Jesus. The latter they cannot do; therefore, they contend for the former. This is done by using the terms of scripture in a sense different from what the author intended. When their idea is that which would be fully and properly expressed by the term, evil speaking, or reviling, they use the term persecution. If this method of treating the language of Scripture was generally adopted, how soon would it introduce uncertainty, and error, and discord into the christian system, where all is truth and harmony? Do we not, with joy and confidence, expect that happy state of the church, the millenium? Will there be persecution then? There certainly will not, if the words of the prophet have any definite meaning. Instead of there being less, there will be more godliness, more scriptural, ardent piety than at any former period. The world itself shall feel the transforming power of the Spirit and truth of God. Natures the most hostile, dwelling together in delightful harmony, are the emblems which predict and describe the uninterrupted universal peace which, at that day shall prevail. *They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.* Place the declaration of Paul parallel with this of the prophet; suppose them both to be in operation at the same time, and there is an evident inconsistency; the one requiring persecution, or denying the existence of piety; the other denying the existence of persecution, and yet affirming the greatest degree of piety. But let the declaration of Paul be confined to those times and circumstances

for which it is intended, and to which it is peculiarly adapted, and then, as parts of the same system, both will be true, and in perfect harmony with each other.

There is no necessity for using a single passage or a single word of scripture in a sense different from that which the Holy Spirit intended; or for a purpose different from that to which they are adapted. There are passages and words for conveying every idea to the mind, for making every impression on the heart which the highest degree of piety may require. Especially there is no necessity for inventing a new criterion of religion; those evidences laid down in the Bible are fully sufficient for the trial of the most eminent christian. Error does not change its nature, though expressed in scriptural language. God has promised the increase to his truth, and to this alone.

II. From the preceding remarks we see the great importance of suitable preparation for the gospel ministry. When a young man devotes himself to the sacred office it is not for a day, or a year, but for life. If a few years, spent in preparing for the work, will render his subsequent life more useful than it could be without this preparation, then he is bound to spend those years in prosecuting this object. It is his life he devotes; therefore, he is to spend every year of that life in those pursuits which will render the whole the most useful. To be distinctly understood, let a case be supposed. The young man is twenty years old when he devotes himself to the work; and he will, in the providence of God, reach the period of three score and ten. Fifty years, then, is the time which he consecrates to this purpose. A pious heart which yearns over the miseries of a sinful world, and a sound mind with an ordinary english education, are all the qualifications he possesses for the ministry. Now, the question is; shall he open the volume of inspiration and undertake to explain the profound and sublime mysteries of redemption immediately, without farther preparation; or shall he spend six or eight, say six years in such studies and such exercises as will strengthen his intellectual powers, store his mind with useful knowledge, especially theological, form his mind to habits of patient investigation and correct decision, and furnish him with the means and the rules of correctly explaining the scriptures? In which case, supposing his piety and zeal to be equal in both, would his life be most useful? the whole fifty without this preparation, or forty-four after it is made? Different opinions prevail on this subject. We have no doubt; after much reflection, a good deal of observation, and some little experience, we believe that after spending the six years in preparation, the remaining forty-four will be much more useful than the whole fifty would otherwise be. It is admitted that, was he to commence immediately, he would improve every year in knowledge and in the facility and propriety of expressing his thoughts. But his acquaintance with the Bible is so imperfect that many parts of it will be obscure and not clearly understood; those, of course, will be passed over; for if he is even an honest man he will not undertake to explain to others what he himself does not understand. His stock of theological knowledge will be very scanty; this from the frequent use he will have to make of it, will, indeed, become more familiar, and for this reason, he will

use it still more frequently. Hence there will be a sameness in his preaching, which, whatever purpose it may answer if he is an itinerant, will become familiar and tiresome, of course, less useful when heard for sometime by the same people. His mind, for want of proper cultivation, will not possess those enlarged and comprehensive views which would give variety and interest to his public services. His profiting, therefore, if it should appear to all will be but by very slow degrees. We think it probable that at the end of six years he will not be as well qualified to give correct, extensive and connected expositions of scripture as he would have been had these years been spent in preparatory studies. At the end of ten years the difference will be still greater, proving more clearly the advantage of that cultivation which will render his whole life more useful. At the end of twenty, all other circumstances being equal, the difference will be still greater; and thus through life the want of intellectual discipline will be felt, and ought to be lamented. This is on the supposition that it is the duty of every minister to *declare the whole counsel of God*, that is, the whole system of revealed truth; to *let his profiting appear to all;* to bring out of his *treasure things new and old;* and that this is his duty not only during the first years of his life, but during the whole of it. It is a mistake, therefore, to suppose that these six years are lost. If this preparation will render the remaining forty four more useful to the church than the whole fifty would otherwise be, then it is plainly his duty to spend them in this way; and if it be a duty, he cannot neglect it and be innocent. Though in a different manner, yet he is as certainly acting under the obligation of his devotedness to the ministry as he is when preaching the word.

Other reasons urge on his attention the great importance of suitable qualifications for the ministry. His devotedness is unconditional. He surrenders himself up for life, with all his powers of mind and body, to the divine disposal, determined to occupy that station, to endure those sufferings to which the will of his Master may call him. Where this station may be, what those services or those sufferings may be, he does not know; it is his duty to obey; of course, to be prepared for this obedience. He may be called to preside over some Literary Institution, where, though not employed in pastoral duties, he will have great and important opportunities of promoting the real interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. We rejoice to know that all our most flourishing seminaries of learning are under the care of ministers of the gospel; and with equal sincerity we think that state of things is to be deprecated where, merely on account of their office, they shall be excluded from these seminaries, and when the exercises of religion and the worship of God shall be banished, as unnecessary parts of education. If called, in the providence of God, he ought to accept of this appointment, provided always that he makes it an auxiliary to the cause of piety, subordinate to the great object of his life; and not as a mere worldly employment in which he engages from selfish motives. Here a number of youth, from year to year, are brought under his inspection, within the reach of his instruction and the influence of his example. They are soon to leave him, and, in different scenes of life, exert an important agency in society. They ought to leave

him with profound respect for his learning, with love for the piety and kindness with which he has treated them, for the friendly earnestness with which he has remembered them in prayer, and directed their views to the Saviour. He may be called to labour in a populous, a wealthy and splendid city, where temptations, peculiar to such a station, may assail him. His preaching should be adapted to his audience, dignified and respectable in the view of the learned, comprehensible to the weak, and useful to all. In either of these stations he should remember the precept of Paul to Titus; *Let no man despise thee.* The station where he labours, after faithfully discharging all his pastoral duties, may afford him considerable time for uninterrupted and useful studies. It is important that his mind should be prepared to improve this time to the best advantage. The people of his own charge are justly entitled to the full benefit of it; the church and the world may have claims on him; his time, his talents, and his learning are the Lord's, to be employed in promoting that kingdom which is from above.—Or he may be called to labour where he will find it expedient to *work with his own hands* for a plain and scanty subsistence, or leave the district to the dominion of ignorance and vice. Every one acquainted with the state of our country knows that there are many places where the people are so widely dispersed, and the calls for ministerial services are so numerous and so urgent as to occupy the whole, or nearly the whole of his time. These stations ought all to be filled; and whoever fills them will find nothing but irregular and detached fragments of time, not admitting of any systematical studies. If his mind is prepared by previous discipline; if he has formed habits of close attention, he will be prepared to derive the utmost advantage from these broken fragments of time, and his ministry will be respectable and useful. But if he enters the ministry without previous training, even these detached hours will be lost, and his public ministry will be meager, without variety, without interest, and comparatively without usefulness. His preparatory years may be, if not the only, yet the best opportunity of obtaining the knowledge of that system of religious truth which it is the business of his life to explain and enforce. Or, finally, he may be called to forsake his native land, the endearments of friendship, to go far away, and make known a Saviour to the heathen who *sit in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death.* Those who have made this experiment assure us that it is a mistake to suppose that men of weak or eccentric minds, without cultivation, are fitted for these stations. On the other hand they tell us that a sound well cultivated mind is necessary in order to usefulness. If he becomes a Missionary to pagan nations, he will meet with that stupid ignorance and superstition which will require the utmost efforts of a well informed mind to remove; he will be assailed by a shrewdness which will require great penetration, judgment, and prudence to escape and refute. If he is not well qualified for this peculiar work, those whom he undertakes to instruct will triumph over him, and thus he will injure the cause which he is labouring to promote.

Such are the stations to which he may be called; all of them important, and all of them requiring a well cultivated mind for the

discharge of their peculiar duties. He knows not, when he devotes himself to the ministry, whether he is to be a Dickinson, a Witherspoon, a Dwight, or a Brainard, a Swartz, a Martyn, a Newell, a Fisk; or whether he may labour in some one of those stations which connect, by almost imperceptible shades of difference, these two extremes. His life, his talents, his learning are entirely devoted. In accordance with this solemn consecration of himself, if called to the work, he will hold the cup of science, judiciously mingled with piety, to the lips of ingenuous youth; he will advocate the cause of the Redeemer in the populous and wealthy city; he will go out into the high ways and hedges and collect into the fold of Christ those who are wandering as sheep without a shepherd; or, crossing the perilous ocean, he will bear the heat of tropical suns, or the rigours of polar skies to make known the Saviour's name where it was before unknown. He has not wisdom sufficient to direct his own course; but he has a heart to love and obey the Saviour, for whose sake he will labour, and suffer, and die, if required.

My brethren in the ministry, can we learn any thing that will farther enlighten our minds and stimulate our hearts from the examples and precepts of the gospel which relate to our office? Can we do or suffer for the gospel's sake more than we are already doing and suffering? In answering these questions, let us remember that the eye of the judge, to whom we are devoted, is fixed upon us; and that the hour of our departure is at hand. Let us work while it is called to day; the night cometh when we can no longer work. On all occasions let us preach as if we never expected to preach again. Our young brother, now to be ordained, and the people committing themselves to his pastoral care, are to receive charges from others appointed to these services. It only remains, therefore, to commend ourselves, and the ministry throughout the world, and the church to Him who *giveth the increase;* Amen!

CHARGES

DELIVERED BY THE

REV. WILLIAM HILL, D. D.

The remaining parts of this solemnity, have devolved upon me; which, according to our directory, shall be, "to give a solemn charge, in the name of God, to the newly ordained bishop, and to the people, to persevere in the discharge of their mutual duties." And first I would say to you

My Dear Young Brother, you have just been invested with one of the most important and interesting offices, with which man has ever been intrusted. You have for some time past, been acting in the character of a Probationer for the Gospel Ministry. Your time of probation has now ended, and you have been clothed with the full office, of a Minister of the Gospel, and an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me address you in the language of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, "Take heed to yourself, and to all the flock, over the which, the Holy Ghost hath made you an Overseer, or Bishop, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."* And also in the words of Peter, "Feed the flock of God, which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filtry lucre, but of a ready mind, neither as being Lord over God's heritage, but being an example to the flock; and when the chief shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of Glory, that fadeth not away."†

The office now committed to you, brings along with it, the heaviest responsibilities which man can be brought under. Your secular character, is now lost, being merged into that of a "Legate of the Skies," you are less than ever, your own; you are consecrated to God; your time, your talents, your influence, are all devoted to his service.

The claims of country, family, friends, and even of self, are all reduced into subordination to the paramount claims, which Christ and his church have upon you; claims of which you can never divest yourself, and which nothing but *death*, or what is infinitely more horrid, *deposition*, can annihilate. Wherever you may be, or whatever employed about, this sacred character will attend you, give a tinge to all you do, and leave traces behind you, savouring life or death, at every step.

"When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman, if when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet and warn the people; then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet and taketh not warning, if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the

*Acts xx—28. †1 Peter v,—2, 3, and 4.

trumpet, and took not warning, his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning, shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned, if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity, *but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.* So thou, O Son of man I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore, thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say to the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die, if thou dost not speak, to warn the wicked of his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."* "Ministers of the gospel are a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one, they are the savour of death unto death, and to the other, the savour of life unto life, and who is sufficient for these things."† But for the promises "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be,"‡ and "My grace is sufficient for thee,"‖ we might all shrink from such responsibility, and retire in despair.

If, My Young Brother, your resposibilities are great, it is because your duties are so, for the one arises from the other. It has now become your duty, to preach the word of God. The ministry of the word is the main instrumentality, which God employs to evangelize the world, and keep his church in order and prosperity. What hidden treasures, what depths of wisdom, and knowledge, are contained in the word of God! What incessant study, and unwearied research, are necessary, to become acquainted with its sacred contents! Great humility of mind—a childlike docility of of temper—untiring perseverance, and incessant, fervent prayer, are necessary for this work; without these, preaching will inevitably become trite and common, and settle down into a cloying sameness which will disgust your hearers, and thin your audience to a mere handful.

It is not only necessary, that a preacher should be able to understand the word of God himself, but "be apt to teach" others; he should know how to propose truth to the minds of his hearers, so as to produce its suitable effect. He should deal closely, plainly, and pointedly with their consciences.

There is a way of preaching, and preaching the truth too, that will never alarm the wicked, arouse the conscience of the carnal professor, nor edify the christian. It would be difficult to point out what is amiss, or wanting in such preaching, but it is common for every one to speak well, of such sermons, and such preachers; yet no interest is excited, no sinner awakened, no christian animated, all fall asleep together while lukewarmness and indifference take possession of the church of God.

You may be plain and faithful in your preaching, without descending to personality or rudeness. Be careful never to carry private pique, or resentment, with you into the pulpit. But the truth is not to be kept back, because some persons may possibly be offend-

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*Ezek. xxxiii,—2-9. †2 Cor. ii,—15, 16. ‡Deut. xxxiii,—25.
‖2 Cor. xxii,—9.

ed by it, and call it personality. You may rest assured, that that kind of preaching, which never disturbs the sinner, nor offends the carnal, secure professor, is not such, as will benefit mankind, or be approved by the great Head of the church. "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did your fathers to the false prophets."*

The truths of the gospel, however weighty and important in their own nature, may be so softened, wrapt up, or generalized, and spoken in such a lifeless and indifferent manner, as to lull to sleep, rather than awaken to all the importance of the one thing needful.

In selecting subjects to preach upon, you should remember, that the most important subjects, are the most plain and comprehensible, and therefore the most useful. Seek not to entertain your hearers with mere speculation, matters of doubtful disputation, or metaphysical niceties; and let your language be plain and intelligible to all.

There is one evil, which peculiarly besets the ministers of our church, and which I would solemnly guard you against. It is well known, that the presbyterians are more careful, and particular, than most other religious societies, respecting the qualifications, and literary attainments of their candidates for the ministry; so that our clergy are esteemed a very scientific, and learned body of men. Whatever truth there may be in this, generally, it must, however, be confessed, that there are many and very distressing exceptions from this general rule, even in those who may carry about with them, their diplomatic parchments.

But as the world ascribes to us, a high literary character, there is great danger, lest it should become a snare, foster our pride and vanity, cause us to endeavour to deserve this fame, at the expense of the simplicity of the gospel of Christ, to acquire the applause of the world, and to dazzle "with the excellency of speech and of man's wisdom," rather than to speak to our dying fellow-men, in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. In doing so, we are sure to preach ourselves more than Christ Jesus the Lord.

A little learning is ever pedantic, while a great degree of it, never finds it necessary to seek occasions for display to make itself known.

Never suppose, my young Friend, that you have made full proof of your ministry, when you have delivered your message from the pulpit. It is possible to be very plain, and evangelical in the pulpit, and very pointed in censuring, and exposing vice, and yet very tolerant and compliable with a wicked world, when out of it. If in private conversation, in family visits, and general intercourse with the world you should let it be known that you were in good earnest in what you said from the pulpit, you will find that you will be much more useful to the souls of men, although you may be less popular with a certain class, or even make yourself more enemies by so doing.

It will henceforward, my Brother, become your duty, to administer the sealing ordinances of the gospel. You will find this to be a difficult and trying work. There is a good natured, and conceding way of performing these duties, by which you may secure an

* Luke vi,--26.

easy and popular passage for yourself through life, but see you to it, that the holy ordinances of God's house, are not prostituted and profaned, and the church filled with carnal professors, to the disgrace of Zion, and the lulling of thousands to sleep in a dangerous security. While we are not to expect to see a pure church upon earth, you should not cease to put forth your best exertions, to do what you can, because you cannot do all that you might desire; but endeavour to make our Zion look forth "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

Great care should be taken, and great fidelity practised, in admitting members to Baptism and the Lord's supper. Although the sentiments, and practice, of ministers, may be very different upon this subject, I am persuaded, that this difference does not arise from any peculiar difficulty there may be, in ascertaining what is right or wrong in such cases. Our first, plain, common sense thoughts, and opinions, upon these subjects are always the best. But when we begin to confer with flesh and blood, to conform, temporize and consult carnal policy, we soon go astray, and afterwards, try to prove that we are right in doing so.

Another difficult subject which you will now have to engage in, is, the exercise of discipline. There is no part of your ministerial duty which will require more caution, discretion, and firmness, than this, and there is none that will expose you to more temptation and censure.

There was a time, when the Presbyterian church was famed and dreaded, and hated, for its pure, consistent, and uncompromising policy und discipline. This, however, constituted her chief glory and excellency, and contributed not a little to her usefulness in the world. Her pure, self-denying, and humbling doctrines, have procured her much odium, and many a curse from this wicked world, but it was her strict and faithful exercise of discipline, and the consequent consistent walk and conversation of her members, which furnished such abundant materials for amusement in novels, and caricature in romances, and kept in constant motion, the sarcastic reproaches, of *illiberality, puritanical fanaticism and hypocrisy.* It is this that has made her more hated than other churches. Others might have been, and probably were, as calvanistic, and evangelical in their doctrines, as she was, but were never so circumspect in their conduct, and unbending in their discipline. The world will bear with plain and pious preaching from the pulpit; in fact it seems to require, and expect it. But then, you must not disturb them with these things elsewhere. This has been perceived, and some ministers, and many members of the church, seem determined to profit by it. And we are not so vain as to think that our own church is clear in this matter.

Such are for shaking hands, and making friends with the world. They think it would be a better way, to tell the truth. Oh! sometimes plain truth, from the pulpit, and then as if they had fully discharged their duty, to leave people to live and act as they please. They will contend that this is much the most prudent and likely way to be useful, because they have found it the most easy and popular to themselves. They say that calling members to account, and subjecting them to discipline is a dangerous business, and sure

to do more harm than good, and that matters might be much better managed some other way. Hence gospel discipline has grown out of use, and become unpopular and unfashionable in some places.

But I shall take this occasion to enter my solemn protest, and lift my warning voice, against this time serving policy, and dangerous innovation, in the House of God. Have we authority to abolish, and set aside, the positive ordinances, and institution, which Christ, the great Head of the church, has established for the government of his house? Are we better judges of human nature, or can we form better laws and devise better means for the conversion of the world and the building up of his church, than He? Oh! my young Brother, consider this subject well, and you will find the more deference you pay to the great Head of the church; the more conscientiously you observe and execute the laws of his kingdom, the more useful you shall be. Like your master, you may make yourself many enemies from a sin-loving world, but you shall enjoy more of the comforts of religion, secure a more peaceful conscience, and smoothe the pillow which shall support your dying head.

I do believe that this faithful and uncompromising discharge of duty will ultimately secure you more respect from the world itself, than that time serving policy, and inconsistent duplicity which you are now cautioned against. Do not suppose that there is any thing inconsistent or contradictory in this. We are forced in war itself to respect consistency and a regard to principle, even in an enemy. We may try to bribe, and induce an enemy to betray his cause and his country. If we succeed we may love the treason and turn it to our own account, but we shall ever despise the traitor.—This wicked world will be constrained to give credit to that minister who honestly discharges his duty, as being a consistent and faithful ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ. They will then see that your object is not to acquire favour with the Rich and Great, or to get possessed of the loaves and fishes—but whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, whether you meet with good report or evil report, you will bear your testimony, spend, and be spent in this cause, and commit yourself and issues to him "who is wise in counsel and wonderful in working."

You have chosen an awfully responsible and difficult calling. You may look forward to sore trials, and heavy disappointments.—In proportion as you copy the example of your Saviour, you may expect to receive the same treatment from a sinful world.

You have now turned your back upon the honourable and lucrative employments of this world; you say you esteem the reproach and poverty of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. You have no need to be discouraged; you serve a good Master.—Fix your eyes up yonder; faith will shew you the recompense of reward, and enable you to endure as seeing things that are invisible.

It may be true that you shall have to put up with the two pence compensation, which the good Samaritan gave to the Host, to whom the poor man who had fallen among thieves was left in charge; but you have his promise, that whatever you spend more, in taking care of him, he will repay you, Oh! and with good interest too, when he shall come again.

Time was, in this country, and it may be so, in others still, when persons might say "put me, I pray thee, into one of the priest's offices, that I may eat a piece of bread." But with us at present, if this be the motive, a person had better turn to any other quarter for a piece of bread than to the laborious, self-denying, and unproductive office of the ministry.

Still it is true, "He that desireth the office of a bishop, desireth a good work." It is not said he shall receive a rich salary, or a fat stall in some splendid cathedral, but he shall have a good work. So Paul found it—so the primitive bishops found it—and so shall faithful christian bishops find it, to the end of time. Let no one take this office upon him who is not prepared to go forth to this good work, and to spend and be spent in it. My young Brother, the salvation of one soul will compensate you for all your labour and toil.

"They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever!"* You have also the promise of Christ† "Lo I am with you always unto the end of the world." One word more, and I shall close what I have to say to you. You know, who hath said "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Methinks I hear you say "Most gladly therefore will I glory in infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. I shall therefore take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then am I strong."‡ Maintain that hold, and you have nothing to fear.

It remains that a few things be now said to the people of this congregation who have called our young brother to become their Pastor. I regret that so little time is left to address you upon this occasion. But the less is necessary, after what you have just heard addressed to him who has now become your Pastor.

My Brethren: You have just heard some of the duties, difficulties, trials, and discouragements, which your Pastor is about to undergo in serving you: Can any one suppose that he is actuated by carnal or selfish motives in undertaking this office? If such were his calculations, be assured, he would have chosen some other profession.

He has claims upon you, for your sympathy and your prayers. He is young in years and young in the ministry. He is subject to the passions, infirmities, and temptations of depraved nature, and you are not to expect angelic purity from any son of Adam. You are to bear with his weaknesses, and frailties, when discovered; cover them with the veil of charity, and defend and support him when he may need such friendly offices. The adage "that a praying people will make a preaching minister" has not lost its truth with its novelty. Be punctual and regular in your attendance upon his ministrations, and ever cherish an humble, affectionate, and teachable temper. Receive the word at his mouth, and endeavour to profit by it. Support and strengthen his hands, in all his attempts to build up this congregation, and promote the cause of

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*Dan. xii.—3. †Matth. xxviii.—20. ‡2 Cor. xii.—9, 10.

Christ generally. Be tender of his feelings and reputation, and pain not his ear with every idle, gossiping, ill-natured tale or report, which you may hear.

Remember, that as he is to give an awful account, how he discharges his duties among you, so you have a no less awful account to give, of the improvement you will make of his ministrations among you; and if he should not be a messenger of mercy to your souls, his messages will savour death unto death, and enhance your condemnation to a fearful degree.

You will expect that he will preach the word, administer the ordinances, visit the sick and the distressed, comfort the dying, be instant in season and out of season, and ever ready at your call. It is right it should be so; if, therefore, you wish and expect that he should devote himself to your service, you must put it in his power to do so. It is wrong to be squeamish upon this subject, for it is as much an ordinance of God, "that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel,"* as that we should pray or hear, or read his word. If your minister should have to entangle himself much with the affairs of the world, to maintain himself and family, he will have the less time and less preparation to serve you. "If he have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if he should reap your carnal things."† One of the characters given to a christian bishop is "that he should be given to hospitality."‡ What a disgrace, to say no more, would it be to any people, to receive the labours of a minister, who would not be able to entertain a friend, or stranger comfortably, or to assist a poor man that might apply for aid!

Let it be your business to make yourselves acquainted with his wants and necessities, and to send in such supplies as God in his providence may put in your power; this will strengthen his attachment to his people, and generate a strong mutual affection between minister and people. You should not look upon this as a charity, it is not only right and proper, but your *bounden duty* to do so. And never *forget that when you fail or neglect* to comply with your stipulated engagements respecting his support, besides neglecting your duty, you are guilty of an act of the greatest injustice.

May God enable us all, honestly and faithfully, to discharge our duties, and make the connection which has now been formed between our young Brother and this people, a blessing to thousands—Which may he grant for Christ's sake. Amen.

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* 1 Cor. ix,—14. † 1 Cor. ix,—11. ‡ 1 Tim. iii,—2.

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